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ABSTRACT

This report recounts the process of desegregation of the education service in the London (England) borough of Newham. It shows how inclusion in the borough began and was sustained by an understanding of inclusion as a human rights issue. It charts the steps which brought about the closure of most of the authority's separate special schools and units over an 18-year period (1984-2002). This publication covers the early days of council policy making, the consultations and compromises, and how those seeking change responded to concerns while keeping their vision in focus. Individual sections address key points, achievements and constraints, history and origins, the arrival of the policy, implementation of the policy, moving onwards, comments and concerns, and a 1996-2002 update. The authors conclude that, if there had been a stronger national strategy to counter deeply embedded prejudices and fears about disability, progress toward inclusion in Newham and elsewhere would have been faster. They urge the borough to take a lead in pursuing national legislation that will establish inclusion as a human right. A time chart, a closure chart, and a list of sources and useful addresses complete the report. (DB)

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Human Rights and School Change: The Newham Story

By
Linda Jordan
Chris Goodey

2002

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the Newham story

LINDA JORDAN and CHRIS GOODEY

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supporting inclusion

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Introduction

'The level and types of involvement varied but significant numbers of people felt this was a fight worth having.'

'By reminding everyone that there was a plan to end segregation because of the human rights of children and young people, it was always possible to gain some level of agreement about the way forward.'

The Newham Story is an account of the desegregation of the education service in the London Borough of Newham. It shows how inclusion in the Borough began with, and was sustained by, an acknowledgement of inclusion as a human rights issue and a commitment to change. The authors, Linda Jordan and Chris Goodey, were among leading figures in the transition from exclusion to inclusion. They chart the steps which brought about the closure of most of the Authority's separate special schools and units over ten years 1984-94, and a further special school in 1999. With one special school still remaining in 2002, the authors report on the need to re-affirm inclusion as a human rights issue.

In the 18 years since Newham's working party published its findings, ordinary schools have undergone major changes which continue to be developed today, bringing benefits to all pupils, both with and without disabilities or difficulties in learning. Inclusion in Newham is understood as an ongoing process which began with a policy commitment to end segregation but does not end only with the closure of special schools.

The Newham Story covers the early days of council policy making, the consultations and the compromises, how those seeking change responded to concerns and how they kept a vision in focus. It describes the building of the mainstream support network, staff development, and pupil achievement. Difficulties occurring in an education reorganisation which is widely recognised as 'major social change' are carefully noted, as are ways of working to tackle them. The contributions of parents and disabled people emerge as an important catalyst in the moves towards de-segregation.

The authors quote extensively from interviews with parents and from council policies and reports. As well as using their personal experience and first-hand knowledge about progress towards inclusion in Newham, they also give their comments and concerns about national trends. This is a new edition containing some amendments to the original and an additional section which updates developments and provides further reflections.

According to the authors, if there had been a stronger national strategy to counter deeply embedded prejudices and fears about disability and learning difficulty, progress towards inclusion in Newham and elsewhere would have been faster. In their view, national strategy on inclusion is weakened by 'contradiction, confusion, flexibility, and conditionality'. They believe Newham has a duty to children and families in the rest of the country to demonstrate what can be achieved and they call on the borough to take a lead in pursuing national legislation that will establish inclusion as a human right.

Linda Jordan was a member of Newham council from 1986 to 1994 and chair of its education committee from 1988 to 1994. A teacher in special and mainstream schools from 1982 to 1996 and head of SEN services in the London Borough of Hackney from 1996 to 2002, she is now a Support Team member of Valuing People, the national strategy for improving the lives of people with learning disabilities.

Chris Goodey was chair of SPINN, the Newham Support Network for parents of children with disabilities from 1984 to 1998, and was part of the group which contributed to the early trials of the CSIE *Index for Inclusion*. He teaches social sciences for the Open University, and researches and writes on the history of psychology.

Key points summary

policy Newham Council started the de-segregation process with a policy commitment which recognised segregated special education as 'a major factor causing discrimination', as well as recognising the rights of children, whatever their needs, to learn together. A mission statement said the goal of the borough's inclusive education policy is to make it possible 'for every child, whatever special educational needs they have, to attend their neighbourhood school.' A 2002 review of the inclusion strategy has also raised the need for the council's initial view of inclusion as a human rights issue to be reaffirmed.

progress In the ten year period 1984-94, the number of special schools in the borough was reduced from eight to two and a further special school was closed in 1999. The number of children in segregated special education has dropped from 913 in 1984 to 94 in 2002 (56 in Newham's last remaining special school and 38 sent out of borough).

constraints Newham made progress towards desegregating special education within existing legislation, despite initial concerns and opposition from some teachers and parents of children in special schools, and within the context of national educational developments which were not regarded as supportive.

compromises Setting up resourced schools was very much a compromise in response to parents' concerns about local schools not having developed sufficient experience and confidence to meet needs. According to the authors: 'If you have a vision the important thing is to try to achieve it rather than to fail to do things along the route which do not immediately look like the ultimate goal'. A 1995 council review of special education made clear that – with certain exceptions – resourced schools were very much a half-way house on the road to a fully inclusive system and should begin to be phased out.

school change Integration of special education into the mainstream was regarded as a matter of radically changing schools rather than fitting children into the existing system. An independent report commented that having to cater for children with significant learning difficulties helped schools make better provision for all pupils.

pupil achievement There is no evidence that including all children has had a detrimental effect on standards. Newham's examination results improved considerably during the de-segregation period and pupils who were once labelled as having severe learning difficulties are now passing exams. When the inclusion policy began in 1986, the LEA average for GCSE A*–C passes was 8% and in 2002 it was 42%.

parent leaders Parents played a major role in the de-segregation of special education by refusing to send their children to special schools. And they continued to press for major policy change to enable all children to attend mainstream schools even when it became clear the most active parents were likely to achieve their individual demands without it.

involvement of disabled people Newham's consultative committee on disability issues consistently supported moves to end segregated education. A disabled person co-opted to the education committee was able to put the voice of disabled people and this became particularly important in discussions on the closure of the Newham School for the Deaf.

parent support Staff from Newham's independent parent support network backed parents in situations where mainstream schools did not initially welcome disabled pupils and also provided regular feed-back to the council on any problems. Occasionally the council had to remind schools of their legal duties but even the most intractable situations usually improved once children were in schools and were seen for themselves and not as a label.

inclusion as an ongoing process There is widespread recognition in Newham that developing an inclusive school system is a major social change and that even when all special schools have closed this process will continue. The authors say: 'Some Newham schools are fully inclusive and understand what it means; others realise that they still have a way to go and some are struggling'.

funding Since Newham set up a system of funding schools to be inclusive in 2000, the number of new statements of special educational needs issued has fallen to an extremely low level.

Philosophical roots

The London Borough of Newham has taken the first important step along the road towards inclusive education. Ending the segregation of disabled people is a change requiring fundamental shifts in the way that people think and what they believe in. However, change is possible and segregation can be stopped. Where the change has been made it can clearly be seen to improve the health of schools and colleges and to make for better experiences for everybody. We hope that by telling some of what has happened in Newham during the past 18 years it can be shown that ending segregation requires one very important ingredient – the commitment to do it. Once a community decides to end segregation, the rest is much easier. Examining how schools are run and looking at how they can be changed for the better is challenging but it is also invigorating.

During the 18 years 1984 to 2002 the number of children attending segregated schools has declined dramatically in Newham. In 1984 there were 711 pupils attending eight special schools and three separate classes, and 202 attending out borough special schools. Today there are 56 pupils at one special school in the borough and a similar number placed outside, including children in residential placements who are a joint responsibility with social services.

Newham Council's aim can be summed up by the following 1995 mission statement: **The ultimate goal of Newham's Inclusive Education policy is to make it possible for every child, whatever special educational needs they may have, to attend their neighbourhood school, and to have full access to the curriculum and to be able to participate in every aspect of mainstream life and achieve their full potential**.

This mission statement may sound unexceptional. But for tens of thousands of children and adults with disabilities in many other education authorities it is the assertion of a civil right which for them still requires a major struggle to achieve. The important first step that Newham has taken is that de-segregation has been firmly stated as council policy and is well under way. The job now in hand is to make all schools genuinely inclusive, in line with the mission statement.

Sharing the vision

When people visit Newham to 'see' inclusive education in practice, it is difficult to know what to show them. Should they go to one of the Victorian buildings which have taken children from their community during the past 18 years and maybe have six or seven children with statements, perhaps half of whom probably would be in a special school in another borough? Or should they go to one of the mainstream resourced schools taking children from a wider catchment area who may be deaf or autistic, as well as those children with statements who live locally? Usually people need to see both, because both show some excellent examples of inclusion.

It has to be explained that if you have a vision the important thing is to try to achieve it rather than fail to do things along the route which do not immediately look like the ultimate goal. To get over 100,000 people (children, families and workers in the borough's education system) sharing a vision of inclusion, sharing an understanding of the vision and then all willing to work hard to achieve it is not an easy task. Even if the whole process were to begin again, it is not easy to see how things could have been done differently. Working with an imperfect system with over a 100 years of history and traditions is not like starting from scratch. You have to work with what you have got.

And there certainly have been constraints, as always happens when you are actually doing something rather than talking about it. In the early 1980s there were very few people advocating an end to all segregated education – at least in the public arena. The 1981 Education Act had built in conditions in its integration section, which could be used to resist integration by anyone who was even slightly concerned about what was happening in Newham. Legislation makes closing a special school quite difficult. The council had to confront a predictable series of situations: petitions to the then Department for Education and Science, meetings with ministers, judicial reviews in the High Court, threats of physical violence against members, and visibly disabled children being pushed to the front of the public gallery at education committee meetings to try and sway public opinion against de-segregation.

The increasing autonomy of schools and the opportunity for grant maintained status brought in by subsequent education legislation acted against creativity and progress. In this context it was absolutely essential to be clear about what the aim was and why it was being done. It meant being opportunistic and seizing any chance to take inclusion forward. To get from A to B in this case had to be a process, even though many people would have liked to move faster. To end segregated education overnight would have required different legislation and probably a different social context.

Resourced schools

Setting up resourced schools was very much a compromise, though some of these schools provide excellent models of inclusion and the children

are in mainstream classes in all of them. Parents of some of the children attending special schools simply would not have allowed their children to have gone to the local school. This is especially true for the parents of autistic children and children with multiple disabilities. They felt that all schools just did not have the confidence and experience to meet the needs of their children, and in some cases they would have been right. However, over the years, more schools have gained confidence and the time when all parents will be happy for their child to go to their local school is getting nearer. One of the problems of creating resourced schools is that it does nothing to get rid of the labels that children are given.

The most positive group in the whole debate has been the local pupil population, and they have been an under utilised resource. Often problems perceived by adults were solved by children – even children of nursery age. Over and over again children have made comments like: 'She's my friend, I just help her'. The children have not developed the fears and prejudices that hinder many adults and certainly even older pupils are much more open to change than many adults. There are many testimonies to the positive effects that a policy of inclusion has had on Newham schools. The developments have taken part during an era when raising standards has been very much to the fore. There is no evidence that including all children has a detrimental effect on standards. Newham's examination results have improved considerably over these years and some pupils who started their school careers in mainstream schools over a decade ago and would then have been labelled as having severe learning difficulties are now taking and passing public examinations.

It is difficult to talk about frustrations and failures. On one hand they exist all the time everywhere and on the other hand they do not matter. A major area of frustration concerns pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The government introduced the requirement for local educational authorities (LEAs) to educate pupils with these difficulties otherwise than in school and to provide referral units at a time when Newham had already made arrangements for them in mainstream. The council had closed its secondary special school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, the primary school equivalent had turned itself into a support centre and a good system of mainstream school support had been established. Although Newham's mainstream arrangements largely pre-empted the new government requirements, they did make future planning in other authorities more difficult. Since then, new legislation on exclusions has had an on/off effect.

Another difficulty is when a parent reports on a negative experience with a particular school. This still happens, of course, and it has to be dealt with within the mainstream school. Until all special schools are closed some people will still believe that there is 'somewhere else' for a particular pupil or group of pupils. A school may have developed really well and suddenly there will be a major problem to work out. However, most people realise that developing an inclusive school system is a major social

change and that it is a long term project. Even when all special schools have closed the process of building an inclusive system will continue. Some Newham schools are fully inclusive and understand what it means; others realise that they still have a way to go and some are struggling.

Eight special schools

The London Borough of Newham was created in 1964 from the old boroughs of East and West Ham, where Labour had been the dominant political force since the time of Keir Hardie. There had always been strong commitment to supporting the most vulnerable members of society and to putting as much money as possible into services. And one of the consequences of this commitment was the development of a number of special schools and high levels of segregation. By the early 1980s there were more than 700 pupils in eight special schools, a high proportion for a relatively small geographical area. A further 200 attended special schools outside the borough.

At the time Newham was proud of its segregated provision: it was seen as a sign of its caring philosophy. But the borough was also proud of its commitment to comprehensive education. In this overwhelmingly working class borough there was strong support for reducing inequalities and improving the life chances of all young people through the education system. The opposition to selective secondary schools, the development of community education and mixed ability classes all stood in stark contrast to the segregation of children with disabilities.

In the 1970s, Newham Council had the foresight to support a voluntary organisation, the Newham Parents' Centre, which worked to increase the involvement of parents in the education system. There was also a close working relationship between the education department and the department of educational psychology at the local polytechnic (now the University of East London). When the 1981 Education Act introduced changes in placement arrangements for children with disabilities and/or difficulties in learning, Newham Parents' Centre in conjunction with the polytechnic ran courses for parents on the implications of the new legislation. At the same time parents of mainly young children in the area, hearing about the Act, were beginning to question the practice of automatically placing children labelled as disabled in certain special schools.

Parents' perspective

Newham Health Authority, like most in the country, had a very influential role in educational placements for children with special educational needs and parental testimonies back this up:

The paediatrician came round when L. was six weeks old and said 'there's a full time place at X (special) nursery when she's two'. They were so negative. She was only that young, and they were pre-conceiving and pre-judging what she was going to end up like.

When E. was one month old I was visited by the borough paediatrician with special responsibility for children with disabilities. She said that E. would be going to a school for 'severely educationally subnormal children' and that a full time (special) nursery place would be hers at the age of two: weren't we lucky?

It's like when Dr Y. came round when he was first born. She did mention that there will be a special school for him to go to immediately he's two ... I just couldn't take that in. I know I screamed at her.

Parents also felt sickened because it seemed the purpose of a psychological test was to demonstrate a child would fail.

It was amateurish, really. The bloke didn't know how to conduct it, how to set out a test. I suppose that was because (inclusion) had never been done before ... the attitude was: 'Look this is absurd. This boy can't go to an ordinary school, he'd be too disruptive – look he can't even pull a pyramid-shaped thing out of a bag'. They was dead against it.

Parents hoped that the 1981 Act might mean children being seen as individuals rather than medical specimens. In April 1983 Newham Parents' Centre arranged for parents to meet a senior member of the education committee. The mood of this meeting was definite, with confident parents assuming that the new legislation meant the end of segregation and asking questions such as: 'Our children are not going to special schools – what are you going to do about it?'. The councillor who met them took a positive attitude, and said that she too agreed with integrated education. She said that she would raise the issue at the next education committee meeting.

At this meeting the committee were considering a report about the 1981 Education Act and the implications for the council. This very long report was all about the new assessment and statementing procedures, with only one brief statement about 'integration':

Members will no doubt wish to take steps to ensure that the spirit of the Act is implemented in terms of the support of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools. Serious consideration will have to be given to the support and integration of such children and a report will be prepared for a subsequent meeting of the committee ... it is unlikely that in future many of these children will be recommended for education in ordinary schools unless more resources are made available. The staffing of special schools in Newham is well above the national average and government guidelines, and it is not acceptable that a child should be moved from the security and support of a small special school to an ordinary school, or to begin their studies in an ordinary school unless teaching staffing ratios become more generous.

The councillor who had met with parents explained to the committee that many parents in the borough were expecting a more positive response on integration, and that it would be necessary to develop a policy. The meeting agreed on the establishment of a working party to develop a council policy. It was to consist of councillors, parents, education officers and teachers. The integration working party met between November 1983 and September 1984 on seventeen occasions. There were some very difficult meetings.

The integration working party

The membership of the working party represented the entire spectrum of the special education debate. It was probably unusual to set up such a broad based discussion group to work out a policy. During the many long meetings there were major rows but despite the difficulties it was a very

important process. A preliminary report was drafted and sent to all schools and governing bodies in Newham for consultation. The most important outcome of these consultations was that nobody said that integrating special education was a bad thing. This was at least a good starting point. The working party was split and it was not possible to produce a single final report. Two reports emerged: 'Report A' was signed by the two councillors, one of the five parents in the working party and four teachers, three of whom worked in special schools and two of whom were headteachers. 'Report B' was signed by the other four parents (including the chair) and supported by one councillor.

Report A sounded like so many reports that have been written about integration: **Any alterations to the present situation should represent improvements or have clear potential for the improvement of educational arrangements for all pupils including those at present attending mainstream schools. We are anxious that integration when it takes place should be of educational worth. Poorly conceptualised and implemented integration is more harmful than no integration at all.**

The report made comments about various things which would facilitate integration and concluded: **The possibilities of special educational provision being made on an integrated basis within a mainstream context of neighbourhood mixed ability comprehensive schools should be developed. Furthermore we feel that provision for pupils in ordinary schools with less serious special educational needs and special educational provision for children of nursery and pre-nursery age (1-5) are areas requiring attention and resources.**

Report B on the other hand said: **Integration means the education of all pupils, handicapped and non-handicapped together, in their neighbourhood school. We assume it to be obvious that integration must be a process, and not something that can happen overnight, without careful planning. This does not mean, however that the process cannot begin now. We advise the council to instruct its officers to take steps immediately towards this aim, and recommend that the process should be well on the way within five years. Our chief concern must be the improved education of our pupils. We envisage that integration will (a) improve the education of pupils with complex and severe special needs, through access to a wider curriculum and a more normal social environment, without any loss of support from specialist teachers, and (b) improve the education of all children in the borough, by educating them in acceptance of peers who are 'different' and have different needs.**

This report was criticised by the signatories of Report A as an 'urgent total integration approach'.

The education committee's response to the two documents was to try to amalgamate them and the end result was yet another consultation document which tried to please everybody. The committee meeting which decided on this new compromise document had been packed with members of the public. A large number of them were special school teachers and some parents of children attending special schools; there was also a lobby of pro-integration parents. The education committee

members realised that they had a major issue on their hands. Instead of grasping it they preferred to agree to a document which said everything and nothing.

Despite its shortcomings, the compromise document did recommend that a pre-school service be established to facilitate the integration of young children with a range of disabilities and learning difficulties. This service was to be made up of a Portage service and pre-school peripatetic teachers who would support children in mainstream nurseries, including social services day nurseries. In addition a pre-school advisory teacher was appointed.

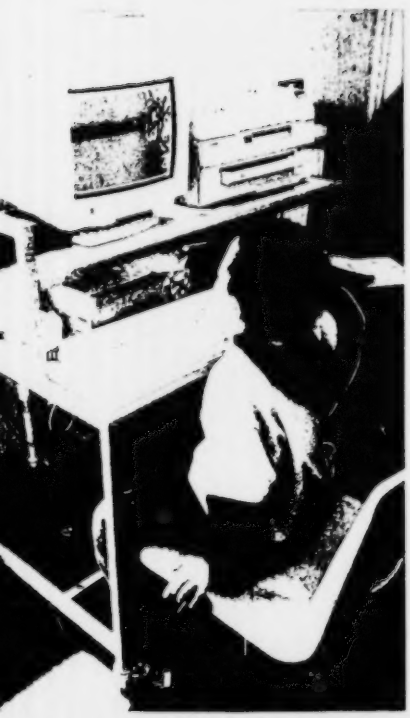
It was clear to the parents who had been active that it was probably going to be possible for their own young children to go to mainstream nurseries. But it was also clear that there was not going to be a major policy change to enable all children to go to mainstream schools or for segregated provision to close. It was obviously not acceptable to have a situation where the children of active parents who were perceived as troublemakers were admitted to their local schools and others were still segregated.

A fight worth having

By late 1985 those people determined to change things realised that there was a massive job to do. The proposal by some people in the borough that it should work towards ending segregation challenged fundamental attitudes and beliefs. Many teachers seemed genuinely frightened by the prospect of having children with disabilities in local schools. The main frustration for parents and disabled adults in the borough was the lack of a sense of urgency on the part of people with no personal experience. Some took the attitude that it was all right to take very many years, no matter that another generation of children and adults would be segregated from their brothers, sisters and communities for substantial parts of their lives. And there was also a lack of understanding of the effect on whole families, particularly on siblings, of the segregation of a family member. The need to become even more involved in a campaign to end segregated education became obvious. The level and types of involvement were varied but significant numbers of people felt this was a fight worth having.

The campaign took a significant turn when one mother decided to use the new procedures to transfer her son from a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties to the mainstream (this was unheard of then). The family had reluctantly agreed to allow their son to go to a special school two years earlier and then came to realise this had been a mistake:

Then we had the battle to get John out, I thought that if I don't win this I'm going to go under. Six foot under. I really felt like that. And I thought, you know, I'm just a hairdresser, who's she? Why would they let my son come out of the special school into an ordinary school?



This particular child had only ever been issued with a 'transitional statement' under the 1981 Act and therefore the family asked for a full assessment of his special educational needs. During this process the parents realised that their son's needs were being assessed from the point of view that a segregated place was right for him, and that most of the professionals giving the advice believed that he should remain at the special school. However, the mother questioned and queried at every stage of the assessment procedure and made appointments to see all of the professionals.

They can be questioned, and they are not always right. I can remember when the paediatrician done John's assessment, right? To get him out of that school. He said to me, 'His limbs are really good, his muscle tone's excellent, eyesight very good, he can kick a ball'. He sat John down and he done some squares – you know, putting things in a square and a round ring – and he done them all fine, and when I came out the paediatrician said, 'Oh, he's doing really well'. But when he actually wrote the report, that was a different story altogether. It said on the report that the boy's muscle tones need to be worked on even more, you know, lots more special help was needed, it was all negative. And that's when we questioned him – because he told me one thing as a mother, but actually on that report he wrote something completely different. And it was because I was going against the grain. I was trying to get my John out of the special school into an ordinary

school, and he believed that handicapped children should be in a special school because that's how it always was, even to the point of him having to make things up. But we questioned it, and we fought it, and we won.

In early 1986 the local Down's Syndrome group asked to see the director of education and he agreed to a meeting. There were about ten parents of young children at the meeting and they told the director that they and many other parents expected their children to go to their local mainstream schools and that if this did not happen they would not be going to school at all. The director was very supportive and said that each child would be individually assessed but that he could see no reason why they would not be able to go to ordinary schools. There was a long discussion about the role of the local health authority and the attitudes of some headteachers and others in the borough. However the parents came away from this meeting feeling fairly positive, at least about their own children.

Parents who were members of the local Labour party successfully lobbied for integrated education to be a commitment in the 1986 party manifesto. One of these parents, who had been a member of the integration working party, decided to stand at the local government elections in May 1986 and succeeded in becoming a member of the council and later chair of the education committee. Several parents sought office as school governors, either as parent governors, local authority representative governors or as co-optees. Two parents were elected as parent representatives on the education committee. More parents decided to seek individual mainstream placements for their children, and through Newham Parents' Support Network people began to attend meetings together and support each other through the assessment procedures. Things were beginning to develop in a significant way. At the same time an increasing number of families were moving to Newham because they realised, from the publicity surrounding the debates about integration, that they might have a better chance of getting a mainstream placement.The first family who moved in 1985 had a child with spina bifida; they were determined to fight for their child's rights but felt more comfortable in an environment where they were not alone.

Human rights and equality

After the 1986 council elections equal opportunities became a major policy direction for Newham. The Greater London Council (GLC) had been abolished and Newham, like many other London councils, was very keen to continue the GLC's equalities work. Newham wanted to ensure that the council's policies did not discriminate against minority groups and that positive action could be taken to enhance the lives of people who faced discrimination. Because discrimination against people with disabilities was considered alongside other equality issues it became possible to discuss integrated education in the context of human rights and equality rather than restrict it to matters of educational placement alone.

In the Autumn of 1986 the lead members of the education committee wrote a short policy statement which they took to the full Labour group. This was all of the Labour members of the council and in fact at that time it was all of the council, since all 60 members were Labour. Not everyone at the meeting agreed with the policy but nobody could argue against the principles:

The London Borough of Newham believes in the inherent equality of all individuals irrespective of physical or mental ability. It recognises however that individuals are not always treated as equals and that people with disabilities experience discrimination and disadvantage.

The Council believes that segregated special education is a major factor causing discrimination. We therefore believe that de-segregating special education is the first step in tackling prejudice against people with disabilities and other difficulties. They have been omitted from previous Equal Opportunities initiatives and it is now obvious that our aim of achieving comprehensive education in Newham will remain hindered while we continue to select approximately 2% of school pupils for separate education.

It is also the right of pupils without disabilities or other difficulties to experience a real environment in which they can learn that people are not all the same and that those who happen to have a disability should not be treated differently, any more than they would if they were of a different ethnic background. It is their right to learn at first hand about experiences which they will possibly undergo in future, either themselves or as parents.

De-segregating special education and thus meeting the needs of statemented children in mainstream schools will also contribute, by the entry of expert qualified staff into mainstream schools, to improved provision for the considerable number of children who already experience difficulties.

The general atmosphere of the meeting was: 'If you can do it great – but I doubt it'. Some people could not envisage how children perceived as having severe disabilities could possibly go to ordinary schools. Others had been involved over many years in the establishment of the special schools and felt very attached to them. They too could not imagine how integration could work. However nobody voted against the policy. It went through the education committee and the full council. There was a lot of interest in it from within Newham and in neighbouring boroughs. It was official council policy and the next step was to turn it into a reality.

Integration steering group

By early 1987 an integration steering group had been set up and it was agreed that the following first steps would be taken in order for the integration policy to be implemented:

1 **The appointment in January 1987 of an advisory teacher who will co-ordinate support teaching for statemented pupils in mainstream schools.**

2 **A teacher will be identified in every school who will act as a point of liaison between the school, the new advisory teacher and any other school involved with the needs of a statemented pupil.**

3 **How to identify and assess special educational needs will be a priority for teacher in-service training.**

4 **A project team of officers from the education department will be set up to progress policy. This team will prepare feasibility reports on all aspects of the policy, including resource implications. The team will work in conjunction with a steering group of members of the education committee which will include one parent representative and one teacher representative.**

Following the preliminary compromise report on integration it had already become more usual for children to be supported into mainstream nurseries if they had been receiving Portage and their parents had asked for mainstream. From 1987 with the implementation of the integration policy this pre-school service gradually expanded to become a support framework across the full 3-16 age range covering general learning support, a service for behaviour difficulties and a service covering sensory impairments.

In 1987 it was also agreed to give the local Further Education College (then under LEA control) extra money to make better provision for all students with disabilities. Alongside it, a new and inclusive sixth-form college was established when secondary schools became 11-16 in 1992. Making inclusive provision at the extreme ends of the age spectrum was of special strategic importance.

Once the new integration steering group had completed its initial work enabling children to be supported in mainstream schools, it became clear that the closure of special schools had to be tackled. The officers assured the members of the steering group that the then Department for Education and Science (DES) would not allow more than one special school to be closed at a time and that there would be a much better chance of success if it could be shown that things were being done in a planned way. They also made the members aware of the legal requirements for consultation and that the closure of a special school was a time consuming and long process. Some members felt that it would take too long to achieve integration if only one school could close at a time. However, it was essential to co-operate with the officers as they had to deal with the schools and do much of the leg work.

The closure programme

It was not difficult to decide which special should be the first to close. Regent School, a secondary age school designated for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, was meant to have a roll of 60 but the local education authority had been placing few children there. Attendance rates were very poor and morale was low. The long standing headteacher had left and a new head with fresh ideas had not been able to turn the school around. Most of the staff were temporary.

In late 1987, having made the decision to close Regent, the integration steering group's officers and members established a timetable for consultation. There were also discussions about the alternative provision which would need to be set up. The preferred option for everybody was that the remaining pupils would transfer to their local secondary schools and that in future pupils would remain in their local schools and be supported there. The resources of the special school would be used to create a team of support teachers and assistants who would work with all the secondary schools to meet the needs of the children with statements who had emotional and behavioural difficulties.

However there was some concern about whether the DES would consider this an adequate alternative provision and whether the secondary schools themselves might prefer to have specially 'resourced' provision located in two or three schools and a smaller amount of support available to the other schools. It was therefore agreed that several ordinary schools who had particularly high numbers of pupils identified as having behavioural difficulties would be asked for their views on having additional on-site resources in order to meet the needs of a number of statemented pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The deputy director of education and the chair of the integration steering group attended the governing bodies of two of the schools. These were very difficult meetings. Although only provisional proposals were being discussed, the governors and the staff were horrified at the prospect of taking pupils who were attending the special school. Although they were told that the number of pupils transferring would be very low and for them would only be three or four pupils, there was serious consternation at the thought of being seen as a school taking 'EBD' students. This was an example of the damage that segregation does to a community. There were images of hundreds of disturbed youngsters storming over the walls to wreak havoc.

The reality was that the new set up would enable them to better meet the needs of pupils they already had. Ironically this made the job of the steering group much simpler. Because the secondary schools had rejected the idea of taking groups of pupils and becoming 'resourced' schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, it was easier to justify allowing pupils to go individually to their local schools. The staff working at Regent School were more or less resigned to its closure and most of the permanent teaching staff were enthusiastic about mainstream support work.

At the parents' consultation meeting for the closure of Regent only two people turned up. They said that they had come to say that they were really pleased that the school was to close and that all of the parents they knew felt the same. The Department for Education and Science agreed the closure, and it took place in July 1988. The new support service for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties began working in September 1988 with ten full time teaching staff and a number of support assistants. The team expanded, and was later included in the delegation of the special needs budget.

From special school to support centre

There was also a special school for primary aged children who had been identified as having emotional and behavioural difficulties. The staff had already started to work with mainstream schools to support children who otherwise would have been referred to them. The school produced its own development plan and turned itself into a support centre. Gradually more staff did outreach work and all children newly referred were only taken into the special school on a part time basis, remaining on the roll of their mainstream school and attending there at least one day a week. This work has continued to evolve and today there are no children attending the centre on a full time basis; the number of referrals has decreased steadily and the situation is currently under review.

The next special school to close, Lansbury, was an all-age school designated for children with moderate learning difficulties. The integration steering group had already been discussing strategies (of which the school was aware and largely against) when the pupils had to be moved out of the current building because it was unsafe. The decision was taken therefore to move the secondary age children into a neighbouring mainstream secondary school and the primary age children into a mainstream primary where there were spare rooms. Lansbury retained its legal status as a separate special school with its own staff and governing body. Lansbury school building was declared unfit for use while discussions continued about its future. Six weeks after the pupils had moved the hurricane of October 1987 destroyed the original Lansbury building.

The children who had been located in the secondary school occupied a couple of rooms and operated very much as a school within a school. Gradually there was some integration of children into certain lessons and it became obvious that the children should become part of the secondary school. This may sound easy enough but it took months of negotiation. Eventually, in 1988, the 'unit' became part of the school and merged with its special needs department; the children joined mainstream classes. The basis of the agreement between the secondary school and the local education authority was that there would be additional staff on site to meet the needs of a number of children with statements who had learning difficulties. It was the expectation that at first the children would be transferred from Lansbury but subsequently from the school's

catchment area. Lansbury was redesignated a primary-age school and the steering group then set about planning its closure.

Meeting concerns

It had become clear during consultations about the secondary section that there was much more concern about the closure of Lansbury than there had been about Regent. Some parents were worried that their children were being abandoned to mainstream schools which in some instances had already failed these same children. When these parents saw that the teaching and other staff were against the closure they became even more worried. There was a campaign to prevent the school from closing. During the consultations it became clear that some parents were very concerned about their children going to their local schools with support from teachers who did not know them. They wanted them to continue to be with staff who had worked with them over a period of time. This was especially true of parents whose children had been diagnosed as autistic or having severe communication or language disorders. The idea of establishing 'resourced' schools emerged. It seemed much more acceptable to the parents that their children might be able to go to a mainstream school with a group of other children from the special school and some familiar staff, and that the mainstream school could build expertise and knowledge.

Primary schools in the borough were invited to express an interest in the resourced schools idea. One school agreed to be a resourced school for children who had communication difficulties or were autistic, and another agreed to take children who had language disorders. The local education authority agreed to buy in extra speech therapy time so that the children attending these schools would have guaranteed access to speech and language therapy. Although many parents were happier about this, some were still opposed to the Lansbury closure. Members of the education committee were heavily lobbied not to agree to it; some of these members expressed doubts and needed a lot of reassurance that the alternative arrangements were good. In any case the parents who wanted a special school might exercise their right to request such a placement. There was still another special school in the borough designated for children with moderate learning difficulties. Alternatively, parents could request an out borough placement.

In the end, the education committee agreed to close Lansbury and this took place in July 1991. Some children transferred to their local schools, some went to the new resourced schools and some to a different special school. The staff from the special school were offered either transfers to the resourced schools or to the learning support team. Five years after the start of the integration policy the number of special schools had been reduced from eight to six.

Development plan

The opposition to the closure of Lansbury school created much more public debate than the closure of Regent or the introduction of the

original policy statement on integration. There had been articles and letters in the local papers and a lot more discussion in schools and organised groups within the borough. Questions were repeatedly put to education committee members asking about future plans and about whether all of the special schools really were going to close. The integration steering group therefore decided to produce a development plan to show that there would be continuous changes and school closures but that this would happen gradually and in a planned way.

This development plan was agreed by the education committee and published in 1989, helping to make clear that the integration policy was here to stay and that the consequences of not segregating children meant that the special schools would close. The ten-year plan showed which developments would take place each year from 1988 till 1997, and how by 1997 provision would be made within mainstream schools for all children and that all of the special schools would be closed or their closure planned.

Involving disabled adults

Disabled adults within Newham had played an important role in the development of special education from before 1986. When parents had first started to make their voices heard about segregation a local group called 'Action and Rights' made contact and gave their support. In 1987 the council established the 'Newham Access and Disability Advisory Group' (NADAG). This was a consultative committee open to all groups and individuals living or working within the borough. The committee was consulted on matters across the council's responsibilities. Its recommendations were sent straight to the council's policy and resources committee. This group consistently supported the moves to end segregated education. Many of the people who attended meetings had been to special schools themselves and spoke of their experiences. The committee was asked to nominate disabled people for co-option to other council committees and there was therefore a co-optee on the education committee from NADAG. This person was then able to put the voice of disabled people on education issues. This was of particular importance when there was opposition to the closure of special schools and became particularly important when discussions began about the closure of Newham School for the Deaf (Tunmarsh School).

The provision for deaf and hearing impaired children in Newham was somewhat erratic. There was a special school which had both a nursery and provision for pupils from 11-19 years. From the age of 5 until 11, however, children were bussed out of the borough to attend a school in a neighbouring borough. These schools were all 'regional provisions'. In addition Newham had two 'units' for children with hearing impairment – one attached to a mainstream primary school and one to a mainstream secondary school, where much withdrawal took place. The school for deaf pupils, although providing for profoundly deaf children, was in the 'oralist' tradition. Use of sign was strongly discouraged, although the pupils signed in the playground. There was disquiet about teaching

methods among some staff members and when a new head was appointed in 1987 a policy of 'total communication' was introduced making use of a combination of sign language, lip reading, residual hearing, body language, and facial expression. However many staff members were not proficient even in the use of Sign Supported English.

The steering group considered all of these issues and was advised that the provision for deaf children should be on the basis that British Sign Language (BSL) was their first language. The group visited Leeds education authority because it had a reputation for having progressive provision, and decided to consult on establishing a similar service in Newham.

Newham School for the Deaf had been considering its future at governing body and staff meetings. It was obvious in the context of the integration policy of the borough that there would need to be changes. The governing body and the education authority established a working party specific to deaf issues. There was agreement to change the name of the school and to introduce some community classes especially for parents, including BSL, and to a limited amount of integration for a few pupils. However it soon became obvious that in order to establish a comprehensive service for deaf students based on equal opportunities and bi-lingualism, the school would have to close.

Deaf culture

There were differences of opinion within the deaf community about the nature of special education. Some people believed that deaf children should not be segregated from their hearing peers and that they should grow up as part of mainstream culture. Others were saying that mainstream education would destroy deaf culture. The problem was that the special school was not really able to develop deaf culture, mainly because the staff were all hearing and not competent BSL users. The alternative was to create a service that could build, develop and preserve deaf culture within the mainstream, and this was what the council proposed to do. Meetings were held with parents, staff and with the deaf community. The idea of resourced schools again emerged as the favoured option. Parents were again saying that they would regret the loss of expertise of the staff from the special school and that they would feel happier if their children could go to one school. Deaf adults were adamant that there needed to be a strong deaf peer group within a mainstream school.

It was therefore agreed by the council to base the secondary provision at one secondary school. In the first instance this would mean that when children reached the age of 11 they would transfer there from the out borough special primary school. The mainstream secondary school already had some provision for hearing impaired pupils and was happy to extend the work that it was doing. A primary school agreed to become the Newham base for the provision for deaf children of that age. The nursery children transferred there from the special school and stayed once they reached five, rather than going to the out borough special school. In this

way within six years all deaf children would be in mainstream. Of course anyone attending the out-borough special school had the option of transferring to the new mainstream service.

It was also made clear that if a deaf student would prefer to attend their local school rather than the resourced school they could. A new head of service was appointed to bring together all parts of the provision into a coherent whole and to help build the bi-lingual ethos. There was a great deal of training to be done and new staff to be appointed. On the whole funds were transferred from the segregated to the inclusive provision, though some extra money was spent. It was necessary to employ communicators, interpreters and deaf adults to work in mainstream classes. The special school closed and the new service became fully operational in 1992 although a lot of work was going on before this.

As had been the case with the closure of Lansbury, at the meetings with school staff, parents and deaf adults, it was necessary to keep re-stating the reason why the council was proposing to close the school. The basic principles could easily have got lost in the confusion, anger and passion that was generated. By reminding everyone that there was a plan to end segregation because of the human rights of children and young people, it was somehow always just possible to gain some level of agreement about the way forward.

Training drive

Alongside the energy being put into the closure of special schools and making alternative arrangements, the other real business was proceeding: children were starting – and staying – at their local community schools. There had been a drive on training, both for staff and governors. The education authority, in conjunction with a local university, established a diploma course for teachers focusing on meeting the needs of pupils with severe learning difficulties in the mainstream. Teachers were also encouraged to take a variety of courses which would help them with the integration process. From 1988 when schools were required to take five training days a year the authority directed each school in the borough to designate at least one of their days for integration. On these days, when schools were looking at the basic issues, officers, advisers and members of the education committee took part. Many of these sessions were not easy and were often spent with people rehearsing their fears about what was going to happen.

Obviously the best training was actually having children and young people in the schools but there was always a sense that the adults wanted some formal training first. The governor training unit produced a module for governors. Although this course did cover the law and technical issues, it was much more about the history of segregation and looked at discrimination and inequality. This proved to be very successful and school governors were on the whole a positive force in the moves towards ending segregation.

Support for parents

As the process launched by the first three closures gathered pace, the education authority realised that it could not monitor everything going on all the time in all schools and knew that it would take a long time for every school to be welcoming to every pupil. It was therefore important that parents had support when things did not go well. At the beginning of the assessment process parents were sent a letter giving not only the name of an officer in the LEA who they could speak to, but also the name of a person at the Parent Support Network based at Newham Parents' Centre (a precursor of the named person concept).

The support network had developed from the early days of discussions about integration and the 1981 Act. The project was funded largely by sources independent of the council and had two (later three) full time workers. Parents could therefore enlist their help with advice about the assessment procedures and statementing but more importantly, had an alternative source of support if their local school was not welcoming. The workers at the network had regular meetings with the LEA and were able to give a regular information bulletin about what problems were occurring and where.

The problems were all really about attitudes. Often staff were scared about taking children. They would talk about resources and facilities and probably had no idea what it felt like to be the parent who was feeling hurt and offended about the way their child was being perceived. Sometimes parents found another school with a more welcoming attitude, but many realised that the policy would only develop if schools took their responsibilities seriously. This was much more feasible within the framework of the borough policy and with the support network there to help. Sometimes more concerted action was necessary and the LEA had to remind schools of their legal duties. Even in the most intractable situations once the child was in the school and was seen for themselves and not as a label, things usually improved.

Educational achievement

Another big issue at the time for Newham was raising educational achievement for all children. The examination results in the borough were very low and the education committee was very concerned to improve the situation. In 1987 the council commissioned an independent inquiry into achievement. The inquiry by the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) reported in April 1989. Many integration developments had taken place during the course of the inquiry and the report said:

Many schools have found that being obliged to cater for pupils with more serious learning difficulties helps them to make better provision for pupils with lesser difficulties already in the school.

The report made many helpful recommendations in the area of special needs and integration, none perhaps more so than the following:

Support services should give high priority to institutional development and to enabling schools to carry out the whole-school reform that is necessary if

they are to cater adequately for pupils with special needs. The needs of individual children must not be ignored, but time has to be found to promote the requisite curriculum development and staff development within schools.

It had been clear from the beginning that the integration of special education into the mainstream was more about radically changing schools than fitting individual children into what already existed. It was also becoming clear that integration had implications beyond school; that young people who had been to their local school were not going to want to attend a day centre or other segregated institution when they were 16 or 19.

Another recommendation made by the NFER inquiry was that the council had too many policies. Teachers reported that they were inundated by too many initiatives and some felt that the policies were politically motivated rather than educational. It was obvious that a new way of looking at integration was necessary; that it was not another initiative, alongside anti-racist and anti-sexist policies or community education; that all of the initiatives belonged together as a whole. It was not healthy to have to keep developing new policies for each group of children being identified as excluded, whether they were refugees, children from homeless families or whoever.

International links

In the Autumn of 1989 a new director of education was appointed. He had been the authority's chief inspector for two years and was very committed to the ending of segregation. He had also been very involved in the development of anti-racist education. He put a lot of effort into bringing together the various policies and in communicating with schools about them and their implementation. In May 1991 the chair of the education committee attended a conference organised by Bolton Institute of Higher Education. The conference was on 'Inclusive education and Community Living'. The speakers at the conference were a team from North America who had experience of working to end segregation. They were from a variety of backgrounds and worked in school systems as well as with excluded adults living in institutions and on the streets. All members of the team had practical experience.

The conference provided a more robust framework for conceiving the ending of segregation. 'Inclusive education' was a much more accurate way of describing what was being attempted in Newham than 'integration', and extending the concept beyond school and into the community and adult life was very helpful. The conference was repeated in Cardiff the following week and other people from Newham attended.

The two people who organised the Bolton and Cardiff conferences said they were organising a study visit to Canada and asked whether any delegates were interested in looking at a school system there which had developed as fully inclusive. The director and chair in Newham were invited because at that time Newham was seen as the most advanced local education authority in terms of integration. A party of twelve from Britain and Ireland made the trip in October 1991 and joined groups of people visiting from various locations in the USA. During the week the visitors saw a school system in which every child with a disability or learning difficulty attended the school that they would have attended if they did not have a disability. It was one of only a small number of school systems in Canada which had taken this approach. A lot of useful insights were taken back to Newham and two of the Canadians visited Newham the following spring and did some work in Newham schools.

From integration to inclusion

By now the term 'inclusive education' had come into general use and it helped everyone to focus more on what needed to happen in all schools rather than on the narrow but necessary focus on the closure of special schools. The implications of the policy were also explored with the local health authorities and with the other departments of the council. Social services in particular adopted policies with much more of a community focus. This was obviously necessary because of the 1989 Children Act and the Community Care legislation, but Newham had its own agenda of community living with a growing number of young people who had not been segregated and who would have expectations of services in the future which would have to be met. During the early 1990s there was a lot of excitement among the people who had worked hard to bring about

change. Results that had not been expected began to be seen. Children whose parents had been concerned primarily with the social and moral aspects of inclusion were achieving far more than anyone had expected. Teachers were beginning to apply for jobs in Newham citing the inclusion policy as a main attraction.

The teachers' unions were able to sign an 'Agreement on Inclusive Education' with the LEA. The agreement states:

In entering into this agreement the parties believe that inclusive education is in the best interests of the borough's pupils/students who have special educational needs. They consider that it will lead to an improvement in the educational provision for these pupils ... It is recognised that a comprehensive system of inclusive education must cater for the needs of all pupils and students within the London Borough of Newham.

Designing for inclusion

In September 1992 two new primary schools were opened, Cleves and North Beckton. They both had been designed to be completely inclusive. In addition North Beckton had facilities such as a hydrotherapy pool and physiotherapy room to meet the needs of pupils who traditionally attended Elizabeth Fry, the special school for children with physical disabilities. Cleves had additional features which would be seen as appropriate for children labelled as 'profoundly and multiply disabled'. From the experience of the previous special school closures it was clear that if Elizabeth Fry was going to close, it would be necessary to demonstrate to parents and staff that for those children whose parents did not choose their local school there would be one offering better facilities than were available in the special school. This was probably even more true for those parents whose children were multiply disabled.

Once the two new schools opened it was then possible to immediately discuss the closure of Elizabeth Fry and the two schools for children with severe learning difficulties including multiple disabilities. From then on children assessed as having these needs had the option of going to their local school or to Cleves or North Beckton. At the same time a secondary school was made fully accessible, so that when Elizabeth Fry closed the secondary age pupils would be able to choose between their local school or the newly adapted resourced school. Minor (and some major) access works had been carried out at most of the secondary schools over the years but £1m was now being spent to make one school as accessible as possible, considering it was an already existing building. During the process a fire had occurred at the Elizabeth Fry and the insurance money was available to be spent on these access works.

The director of education left in mid-1992 and a new director was appointed. A commitment to inclusive education had been a major requirement for the job and the new director had that commitment. In December 1992 the education committee agreed to close another special school, Gurney. This was the borough's other school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and its roll had decreased considerably over

the six years since the integration policy had begun. However, it had a particularly strong historical following, and some people were determined that it would not close. Officers felt that lessons should be learned from the experiences of previous school closures and that this time there should be more consultations. These took place at a very early stage with every interested party. In the planning it was not felt appropriate to create resourced provision for these children as by now so many children with learning difficulties were attending mainstream schools that there was sufficient expertise in all schools.

However such was the campaign against the school closing that it was again necessary to identify at least two primary and two secondary schools to take some children transferring from Gurney. Identifying these schools was not easy. By now schools were much keener on the inclusive model and did not really feel it appropriate to be taking children who they felt should be going to their local community schools. However four schools did agree to take a group of children each and a closure proposal was put before the Secretary of State. Eventually the school was allowed to close officially in July 1994, although virtually all of the children had transferred to other schools long before that date.

While this was all going on the Elizabeth Fry special school was working with the newly resourced mainstream schools to develop a plan to transfer their pupils. As usual all the pupils had to be re-assessed and discussions held with parents. This happened during 1993/94 and the special school was empty by July 1994. The education committee then agreed to close the school and sent its proposals to the Secretary of State, who agreed them. Elizabeth Fry had been a source of considerable and vociferous opposition to the integration policy for a number of years, but in the end this transition was achieved without great controversy. Perhaps because four schools had closed already it was clear what the policy meant, and that the council meant what it said.

At the same time (1994) plans were underway to make provision in the borough for blind children. The practice had been for them to attend a special school in a neighbouring borough. As from September 1995 two primary and two secondary schools were resourced to take blind children and a new support service was established.

Developing local expertise

After 1986 the educational world outside of Newham's integration policy did not stand still. There were several Education Acts bringing in local financial management; opting out with grant maintained status; national curriculum and testing; league tables and worst of all the relentless need to make budget cuts every year. But despite these new arrangements which had the potential to discourage the fainthearted, the development of inclusive education continued. The 1995 review which contained the inclusive education mission statement quoted at the beginning of this booklet also set out the framework for future development. It said:

There is an increasing expectation and acceptance that the vast majority of pupils with [statemented] special educational needs will attend their local

school and that most schools will develop their own expertise and good practice in supporting all pupils, with extra support, usually from peripatetic teams, where additional specialist help is required.

The review acknowledged that resourced schools were a necessary compromise in order to make it politically possible to close segregated institutions but that with certain exceptions they were only a halfway house on the road to a fully inclusive system and should begin to be phased out. It also opened discussions about the future of the two remaining special schools, both for children with severe learning difficulties.

Cause and effect

When the debate about ending segregated education began in Newham in the early 1980s there was a sense that if something was not sorted out quickly Newham would be left behind in developing inclusive practice. It came as a great surprise to the parents on the integration working party, when visits were made around London, that little seemed to be happening elsewhere either. A few years later, it came as even more of a surprise to see that the development plans for the new London authorities which were to take over following the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), did not include proposals to move towards ending segregation. People from Newham were asked to speak at conferences to try to convince these new inner London authorities to take this golden opportunity. The failure to adopt clear de-segregation policies at that time means that today many councils have equal opportunities – and even anti-discrimination policies for people with disabilities – but continue to segregate disabled children, even when their parents are requesting a mainstream placement. Well-intentioned people have failed to see that segregation in education is both a cause and effect of the discrimination that they want to end.

As time has passed, it has become clear that the progress towards inclusion across the country is very slow, and in some areas non-existent. Newham is visited by a stream of academics, practitioners and parents. It has been featured in many radio and television programmes and in the press. When people visit Newham they see ordinary schools and sometimes one wonders quite what they are expecting to see.

The difference in Newham is that there are a few more children in each school who have a perceived difficulty with learning or a physical disability than there would be in other areas. Supporting children to learn is simply what good education is about and yet it seems so difficult to achieve.

Parents from all over the country are in touch with the borough, especially with Newham Parents' Support Network, and also with LEA officers and members asking for advice on how they can secure a mainstream school place in their own area. It is amazingly difficult to advise parents from other authorities. It is unacceptable and it seems to make no sense that their own LEA wishes to forcibly segregate their child, yet if they lived in Newham their child could go to a mainstream school.

Some policy makers from other boroughs get angry at the mention of Newham. On more than one occasion, parents have been told by their local education department or education committee member that what is going on in Newham is not 'really integration'. One chair of an education committee remarked that his LEA had a good record on integration because the proportion of 'statemented children' attending special schools over a four-year period fell from 80% to 50%. However, he did not add that during the same period the hard numbers of children actually attending special schools had increased from 620 to 680. It is difficult to understand such remarks except as a kind of defensiveness about being

unable to support all children going to ordinary schools. Newham still seems to be the only LEA in the country with an overt, stated policy to end all segregated education and regrettably very few people with the power to change their own systems are prepared to share what has been learned. In Newham there is a full commitment to working towards the goal of a de-segregated system.

Community pressure

During the years alliances have been formed across the country and internationally. There is a network of people across the world working for the same end and it is exciting that Newham is very much part of the network. Many communities in developing countries are struggling to establish inclusive systems in circumstances which should make those who oppose it here feel ashamed of themselves. Fortunately there is at last a growing awareness of the human rights issues. The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which supports inclusive education is widely acknowledged by people working with children and it is now common to see it on the walls of day nurseries and playgroups. Perhaps if policy makers will not willingly develop their systems to end segregation, eventually the pressure for change will come not only from parents and disabled people but from the wider national and international community.

The case for inclusion has been made. Certainly most LEA policies about special needs and special needs reviews acknowledge that inclusion is a good thing. Most claim that the LEA has a policy of placing children in mainstream schools 'wherever possible'. It is exceedingly rare – if it happens at all – for anyone to argue against the principle of inclusion. The problem with inclusion is wanting to actually do it.

More and more parents are asking for mainstream placements and in many cases they are securing them often at the expense of a lot of pain, time, energy and conflict. The families who are experiencing this pain are those whom society generally seeks to help and support. The stories that some people tell about their struggle for inclusion do not seem to be consistent with a caring society. There are also children out of school all over the country because their LEAs will not agree to mainstream school places, and their parents will not agree to segregated school places. This system of educational apartheid is continuing even when South Africa has managed to end racial apartheid.

Everywhere in this country there are examples of inclusive education in practice which some people, when they have not seen them, will say are not possible. The problem is that not enough people with the power to make the changes have the will to carry them through. The legal framework is already there to end segregated education. The next step is to want to do it. After that, the rest is much more straightforward, with lots of examples for guidance and lots of willing people to help. The important goal, nationally, is to continue reducing the number of children in segregated provision. This is real progress and should not be confused with reducing the proportion of statemented children who are

segregated by increasing the overall number of statements. In Newham the proportion of children statemented relative to the total school population has not increased.

No going back

Once segregation has ended it will not be long before we look back in horror at what we used to do to children and to ourselves. Children have the right to be together. They have the right to be part of a community. Children whose brothers or sisters have a disability share their lives with them. Why should they be torn apart when they go to school? Children with disabilities need as many friends as everyone else and they need the same experiences as everyone else. To deny them the same ups and downs of ordinary school life is to deny them their humanity. This past decade has seen a very slow start and Newham has taken that first important step – to make a policy commitment to end segregated education in separate special schools and units.

1996–2002
update and reflections

This section gives an update on aspects of change in Newham since the original report was written in 1996.

In addition, the authors offer recent reflections on progress and change with inclusion in the borough.

UPDATE

Resourced schools

The concept of resourced schools, which emerged from the consultation on the original school closure programme, had always been seen as a transitional measure. They were a means to the end of closing special schools but not in themselves a goal, except perhaps in the case of provision for deaf students. The secondary school initially resourced to take deaf children was not local to the primary resourced school. Once the system became established, the primary children wanted to transfer with their friends to the link secondary, and in 1998 this secondary school was resourced for deaf students, who now began to transfer there from the resourced primary school.

Over the period 1996-2002 two new secondary schools have been designed and built to include all children, as have the several new primary schools. The building of the new secondaries coincided with the closure in 1999 of Beckton special school for children with severe learning difficulties. One of them was resourced to take students with profound and multiple disabilities. This enabled some of the older Beckton students to transfer to a mainstream secondary school, while children transferring from the corresponding resourced primary school had the same school earmarked for them. However, something similar happened as with the deaf students. Children also wanted the opportunity to transfer to the geographically linked secondary school, with their friends, so that this linked school too is now accustomed to taking children with profound and multiple disabilities.

Otherwise the amount of resourced provision at the secondary schools has gradually reduced as more children transfer to their local secondary. At primary level, the schools resourced earlier on to take children with language difficulties and moderate learning difficulties have now been phased out. This, and the fact that all the time new children have been entering their local schools, means that a majority of them are now going to their local schools.

Inclusion charter and audit

It was clear from the beginning that not all local schools had the same attitudes as each other to the children who were now coming there and whom most teachers had not experienced previously. This coincided with the move towards local management of schools (LMS) and grant maintained status (GMS), both of which made LEAs nervous of being perceived as trying to tell schools what to do. In spite of this a first major attempt to improve the welcome given to children and to teaching

practice in all schools came in 1997, when an Inclusive Education Charter containing a list of basic principles and beliefs was drawn up by the authority and schools invited to sign up to it. With it came money for them to undertake research and training of their own, and an Inclusive Education Audit. This was a set of ethical and practical guidelines which drew together the best experiences from the most welcoming schools and enabled the rest to develop inclusive practices within and beyond the classroom. Two of its co-authors also went on to contribute to the development work and trials for the *Index for Inclusion*, written by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow. Newham's Charter and Audit however turned out not to be the whole answer to the problem of varied attitudes from schools, as we shall see.

Statementing and delegation of budgets

Like other LEAs, Newham was coming under government pressure to delegate its special needs budget. At the same time, by 1999 it had become clear that the continuing reliance on statements to categorise children and release resources was at odds with the vision of inclusion. Newham had a relatively high number of statements, so that money, which could have been spent on inclusion, was being spent instead on the bureaucracy of the statementing procedure. The LEA decided to devise a combined strategy on delegation and statementing. It was in a unique position to do this. It was able to look at how schools could be funded to meet the needs of all their children on the assumption that every school had a number of children with significant disabilities. The closure of special schools meant that even potentially unwelcoming mainstream schools had less of an assumption than they otherwise would, that there was some separate place where certain children 'would be better off'. And the fact that the vast majority of the special needs budget was being spent in the mainstream sector meant that statements were becoming superfluous, although it was recognised that this depended on careful monitoring of the way the budget was being spent in individual schools.

From April 2000 the borough introduced a system of funding schools to be inclusive. In addition, it set up cluster groups of schools to manage budgets collectively for students with 'exceptional' needs greater than a school would normally encounter even given the presence there of students who previously would have been in special schools. This has encouraged schools to see the budget and the students identified by it as their own responsibility. The number of new statements issued has fallen to an extremely low figure.

Policy update and review

One of the really important milestones in Newham's policy being acknowledged as positive was in 1999, when it simultaneously headed two league tables: one was for having the lowest percentage of children in special schools in England, the other was the Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE) table of local authority areas with the most improved GCSE results over a four-year period. There was a lot of media

publicity which focused on how including all children has a positive effect on improving education for everybody. These improvements have continued. When the inclusion policy began, in 1986, the LEA average for GCSE A*-C passes was 8%, in 2002 it was 42%, and in no year since league tables were introduced, have the results decreased. Perhaps even more importantly, A-G passes have risen to among the highest in the country.

In 1999 the Ofsted inspection of Newham LEA was a significant success, inasmuch as it remarked about achievement that Newham 'serves the country well, in demonstrating ... that it is possible to successfully challenge the assumption that poverty and ethnic diversity must necessarily lead to failure.' In respect of inclusion, it said 'Much of what the LEA does is well done and in some respects a model for others to follow ... It has successfully implemented a policy of inclusion of pupils with special educational needs,' acknowledging that Newham has the lowest percentage of children in special schools of any authority in the country, and that the policy is not particularly expensive 'because its additional expenditure on mainstream support is more than offset by much lower expenditure on special school places.'

The specific weakness was seen as being that 'the LEA knows too little about the impact of the strategy on pupils' attainment and/or whether the attainment and progress of pupils has or has not risen as a result of the strategy.' One of its recommendations therefore was to 'evaluate the impact of [the] inclusive education strategy on the attainment and progress of all pupils', in spite of the fact that the report elsewhere stated that the rise in GCSE results was the fastest in the country. The inspection team also felt that there should be some separate provision for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties at secondary level, based on the observation of some children in schools, even though it commented on the steep fall in exclusions in a positive tone of voice, and on the inclusive provision for emotional and behavioural difficulties as 'outstanding'.

The LEA did not respond initially to these recommendations, as it was clear that pupil achievement was rising across the board as the national statistics proved. However, in 2002 the LEA decided to invite external consultants to conduct a comprehensive review of the inclusion strategy. Discussion groups were held with people representing all sectors of the education service, parents and students. Out of these discussions came the sense that the overwhelming majority of people in the borough recognise that Newham is at the forefront of policy about inclusion and are positive about being involved, and that inclusion really is about all children being included in mainstream schools. Head teachers too, tended to see inclusion as a social justice issue. Teachers felt that inclusion had fostered creativity and made them more skilful and able to learn from each other. Many parents had been worried about the review taking place; after so many years of inclusion being accepted and the norm, was there now some question being raised about it? However, the external review has been used to find out ways of improving and taking forward the inclusion strategy, as well as reassuring Ofsted on their specific questions

about achievement. People taking part in the review particularly raised issues still needing to be addressed:

- that there are still some schools not as welcoming as others
- that there needs to be constant attention to improving the quality of experience for each student
- that ways must be found of ensuring that teachers rather than support staff take full responsibility for all students
- that the Council's initial view of inclusion as a political question of human rights needs to be reaffirmed, so that it does not become merely an administrative issue.

RECENT REFLECTIONS

Strong leadership

People from Newham are nowadays asked to speak around the country on the theme of lessons learned from the Newham experience. It is now nearly twenty years since people in the borough decided to interpret positively, the 1981 Act's duty on LEAs to integrate. There are young adults emerging from this system who have had full social lives, have participated in further and higher education and have begun living independently, who would not have done so if they had spent their school years in a segregated setting. For those coming after, inclusion has been the norm. This has meant that younger families have not had to fight for their children to be included. Any child born or arriving in Newham has for a number of years been directed by the LEA to a mainstream school. Of course, occasional placements still break down. But generally the outcomes stand in stark contrast to what still happens across most of the rest of the country (see CSIE's statistical report *LEA inclusion trends in England 1997-2001*).

What has been learned from this experience? Change occurs when people with a vision have an opportunity to use their power positively and to recognise where power lies. Change also occurs when they are prepared to take chances and to be opportunistic. We have learned that people respond to strong leadership; most people are nervous about change and being seen to go against the grain, but if there is strong leadership, people respond positively. The majority of people respect the setting out of a strong, radical vision, enabling other people to take leadership roles at different levels and in different settings. Many people felt enabled to articulate views that they previously felt might be thought lunatic or wacky; the policy gave people permission to be at the cutting edge. We have learned that schools that include all children from the community are better schools all round: they focus much more on children as fully individual humans and cope with issues of bullying, friendship and mutual caring, as well as being able to raise academic standards, often more quickly than other schools.

Everyone involved in the implementation of the policy is also acutely aware that we could have done so much more, and quicker. It is difficult to be an island of inclusion in a sea of traditional practices. Newham is

not in fact an island, and it is subject to an array of external pressures, which impede progress.

Embedded prejudices

The chief of these pressures is that people with disabilities, and particularly those with severe learning difficulties, really are seen by society in a very negative light. There are deeply embedded prejudices and fears, which reflect the fact that society at large has a value system ranking disabled people at the bottom. Also deeply held by the majority of people, are huge assumptions which we learn from the day we are born, but which we do not recognize because they are so hard to confront and think about. This is best illustrated by the testimony of families. They are aware that everybody they meet assumes that they are unhappy about having a disabled child or family member. It is outside most people's conceptual framework that a disabled person might be of no different value to anyone else, or that it is only because of society's current preoccupations that we even think disability is an issue. This – rather than any financial or administrative problem – is what makes it such a big deal to include. We should never underestimate the prejudice and thus the battle that we are engaged in.

If there had been a strong national strategy to counter some of this prejudice, things would have happened faster in Newham and elsewhere. The national strategy has been not just ambiguous but disingenuous:

- develop inclusion but do not close special schools
- children should be in mainstream schools but some children should not
- declare a national aim to further inclusion, but provide no leadership from the top, no strategic initiatives, no national development and support
- publish a Green Paper and White Paper proclaiming support for inclusion, but provide no targets or requirements for LEAs to decrease segregation, and at the same time, add something about a need for special schools to continue.

Contradiction, confusion, flexibility, conditionality. The Ofsted report on Newham also displays this, acknowledging that inclusion is a good thing in a good LEA and yet demanding evidence that it works, as if it could be good if it did not work. The debate lacks any philosophical rigour, because it is informed by the deeply embedded prejudices of each person in the system, especially at the top. Parents across the country still have to face offensiveness and abuse if they want mainstream education. They are scandalously made to feel they are being difficult; they offend against society by having a child it does not like in the first place and then being made to feel ungrateful if they say that two hours a week of art in the local secondary school is not enough.

Disability, far more than any other topic, proves that power is unequally distributed in our society. There is no transparency about where it lies and how it can be acquired. This is not in any way offset or challenged by our democratic political system. The deeply embedded prejudices

among workers in human services hold back the best intentions, while people who love their children and want them to have a normal life in the community will eventually just get into role and put up with the status quo.

In view of these external pressures, is there something that Newham should have done differently? The specific goal all along has been that every child is in the school they would have been in if they didn't have a disability. The standard criticism of Newham's policy around the country is that it has been unplanned. But you do not achieve a goal by having a complicated and detailed plan, because you learn along they way. If you make mistakes along the way, it throws you off course because the set plan is no longer valid. The many integration plans developed across the country in the 1980s were huge complex documents, in which you could not get to step 100 because when you got to step 2 something there went wrong and threw you. *First* steps have to be absolutely crystal clear and simple, like the vision itself.

Tackling new questions

One mistake in Newham was that at a certain point after the first step of closing special schools, once the great majority of students were in mainstream, more was not done. Even at the stage of updating this report (late 2002), it is always important to focus on what needs to be done next. But with the aid of the LEA's review these questions are now being tackled, and it may have been a good thing that some of them were not tackled in the beginning because it may have affected the simplicity of the operation.

Perhaps influenced by the threat of grant maintained status (GMS), Newham did not act quickly enough on the realisation that the crucial responsibility lies in the senior professional positions, that new heads and senior LEA officers coming fresh into the borough needed to be inducted and disabused of the assumptions bred in the more prevalent

segregationist practices outside. It did not realise early enough that 'special needs' training preserved a mentality of separateness and that all training needs to be holistic. It relied too long on a policy of natural wastage for placements in out-borough schools and Newham's one remaining special school (both of which have been admitting students whose parents have demanded it, in spite of the initial recommendation of mainstream), as well as for part-time 'special' placements of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and for out-borough special school placements.

Natural wastage in these small numbers of students has indeed happened, but this neglect of the practical need to keep taking the positive vision forward has only recently been directly addressed. Together with the other anomalies, it should have been tackled earlier as a way of removing the last disincentive for recalcitrant mainstream schools to take responsibility for all students. Meanwhile many senior health professionals remain largely unsupportive, as one might expect given the medical profession's vested interest in genetic technology, which disseminates a dislike of certain people through the belief that they ought not to exist. These are issues that simply cannot be dealt with by detailed administrative plans.

Newham must continue taking things forward because it owes a duty to children and families in the rest of the country to point out what can be done. In addition, leading members, officers and professionals, as well as parents who now take the system for granted, need to become aware of this duty, of the deep philosophical gulf between practice in Newham and in most of the rest of the country, and of the need therefore to take a lead in pursuing national legislation that will establish inclusion as a human right.

time chart

developing inclusion in Newham

- **1972** Newham secondary schools become comprehensive.
- **1983** In response to the 1981 Education Act, the council accepts the principle of 'integration' and establishes a working party to develop a policy.
- **1984** Pre-school service established to support children into mainstream nurseries from Portage.
- **1984** Integration working party unable to agree and produces two reports.
- **1986** Council agrees first Integration Policy.
- **1987** New structure for supporting integration established. (Co-ordinator for supporting children in mainstream schools, Learning Support Service, Integration Steering Group.)
- **1987** Education Committee agrees the closure of Regent Special School for pupils aged 11-19 with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- **1988** Secretary of State agrees the closure of Regent Special School.
- **1988** New secondary Behaviour Support Team to work alongside Learning Support Service.
- **1988** Education Committee agrees the closure of the secondary section of Lansbury Special School for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- **1989** Development plan for integration.
- **1991** Secretary of State agrees the closure of Lansbury Special School in its entirety. Resources relocated to the Learning Support Service and to 'resourced schools'.
- **1991** Education Committee agrees the closure of Tunmarsh School, formerly Newham School for the Deaf, catering for nursery and secondary pupils.
- **1992** Secretary of State agrees closure of Tunmarsh School.
- **1992** Education Committee agrees the closure of Gurney Special School for pupils aged 3-19 with moderate learning difficulties.
- **1992** Policy changes from 'Integration' to 'Inclusive Education'.
- **1992** Provision now made in the Borough for all deaf pupils at mainstream schools. New Bi-lingual (BSL) Service established.
- **1992** Eleanor Smith Special School for pupils aged 5-11 with emotional and behavioural difficulties stops taking children on roll and becomes a primary behaviour support service, supporting mainstream schools and taking a small number of children on a part-time basis. Eleanor Smith remains a school technically (to be reviewed).
- **1992** The majority of the primary age children from Elizabeth Fry Special School (for pupils aged 3-19) with physical disabilities and complex medical conditions transfer to mainstream school.
- **1993/4** Secondary age pupils from Elizabeth Fry Special School transfer to mainstream school. Education Committee agrees the closure of Elizabeth Fry.
- **1994** Secretary of State agrees the closure of Gurney Special School.
- **1994** Secretary of State agrees the closure of Elizabeth Fry Special School.
- **1995** Provision for blind children made within the borough at mainstream schools (previously children attending out-borough special schools).
- **1995** Review of Inclusive Education recommends:
  1. Remaining two special schools, Beckton and John F. Kennedy (both for pupils aged 3-19 with severe learning difficulties) to amalgamate. Planning for this to begin straight away.
  2. The number of young people attending the amalgamated special school to diminish and its role to be reviewed.
  3. Eleanor Smith Special School to continue as a primary support service supporting schools in meeting the needs of primary aged children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- **1995** Some children with severe learning difficulties already transferring to local mainstream secondary schools.

- **1999** Secretary of State agrees closure of Beckton Special School.
- **1999** Ofsted inspection of Newham: a significant success with Ofsted saying the LEA '... serves the country well ...' and is a model for others to follow. The 'successful' implementation of Newham's inclusion policy was not particularly expensive 'because additional expenditure on mainstream support is more than offset by much lower expenditure on special school places.'
- **1999** Newham simultaneously headed two national league tables: i) the LEA with the lowest percentage of children in special schools and ii) top of the DfEE's table of LEAs with the most improved GCSE results over a four year period.
- **2000** From April 2000 the borough delegated its special needs budget, and used this to introduce a system for funding schools to be inclusive.
- **2002** LEA review of inclusion in the borough. Local people called for, among other things: reaffirmation by the council of inclusion as a political question of human rights, not merely an administrative issue.

closure chart

phasing out eight special schools

(Pupil numbers for schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are given for 1984 at the start of the de-segregation campaign. Pupil numbers for Schools 7 and 8 are 1996 figures.)

School 1 1988 Secretary of State agrees the closure of Regent Special School (62 pupils).

School 2 1991 Secretary of State agrees the closure of Lansbury Special School (78 pupils). Resources relocated to the Learning Support Service and to 'resourced schools'.

School 3 1992 Secretary of State agrees the closure of Tunmarsh School (61 pupils).

School 4 1992 Eleanor Smith Special School (75 pupils) stops taking children on roll and becomes a primary behaviour support service, supporting mainstream schools and taking a small number of children on a part-time basis. Eleanor Smith remains a school technically (to be reviewed).

School 5 1994 Secretary of State agrees the closure of Gurney Special School (123 pupils).

School 6 1994 Secretary of State agrees the closure of Elizabeth Fry Special School (89 pupils).

(In addition to closing six special schools by 1994, Newham had also phased out one separate class for children with partial hearing (17 pupils) and two separate classes for children with speech and language disorders (40 pupils).)

School 7 1995 Review of Inclusive Education recommends Beckton Special School (46 pupils) and John F. Kennedy Special School (53 pupils) to be amalgamated into one special school. **1999** Amalgamation plan dropped and Secretary of State agrees closure of Beckton Special School in the same year.

School 8 2002 Role of John F. Kennedy School (56 pupils) under review.

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National legislation

1981, 1993 and 1996 Education Acts and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (available from HMSO, London).

Newham Council policy documents

Reports on 1981 Education Act to Newham Education Committee and reports from the Integration Working Party, 1983-85; Integration Policy Statement,1986; Integration Development Plan, 1989; Agreement with Teacher Unions, 1990; Review of Inclusive Education Strategy, 1995, Consultation Document; Strategy for Inclusive Education 1996-2001; The Inclusive Education Charter 1997; the Inclusive Education Audit 1998; and Inclusive Education Strategy 2001-04 (all available from Newham Education Department).

International policies

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (available from UNICEF, 54, Lincoln Inn Fields, London, WC2A 3NB); Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (available from UNESCO, Special Education Programme, 7 Place de Fontenoy 75352 Paris O7-SP). A free summary of these and other international documents on inclusive policy and practice is available from CSIE.

Other documents

1986, 1990, and 1994 Newham Labour Party Manifestos (available from the Secretary, Newham Local Government Committee, c/o Newham Town Hall, London E6); *Boosting Educational Achievement*, report of the independent inquiry into educational achievement in the London Borough of Newham, chair, Seamus Hegarty (available from Newham Education Department and the National Foundation for Educational Research, NFER, The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berks SL1 2DQ); *Living in the Real World: Families Speak about Down's Syndrome*, ed. C.F. Goodey 1991 (available from Newham Parents' Centre Bookshop, 745 Barking Road, Plaistow, London E13); *Maps and Circles*, Marsha Forest and Evelyn Lusthaus (available from Centre for Inclusive Education and Community, 24 Thome Crescent, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6H 2S50).

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The Newham story *is an account of the de-segregation of the education service in the London Borough of Newham. This new edition (2002) shows how inclusion in the borough began with – and was sustained by – an acknowledgment of rights and a commitment to change. The authors,* **Linda Jordan** *and* **Chris Goodey**, *were among leading figures in the transition from exclusion to inclusion. They chart the steps which brought about the closure of most of the authority's separate special schools and units over an 18-year period, 1984–2002. During this time Newham's mainstream schools underwent major changes which continue to be developed today, bringing benefits to all pupils, both with and without disabilities or difficulties in learning.*

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